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ABSTRACT

A multicultural thrust should be the key element in restructuring American education in preparation for the 21st century. Demographic trends indicate that European Americans will be outnumbered by other racial and ethnic groups in the next century. Consequently, new educational techniques and content need to be developed and infused into school curriculums to ensure that children from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds receive an equal and adequate education that prepares them to take a productive and meaningful place in the 21st century. The National Education Goals are an attempt to address the need for major improvements in how children are educated. However, the National Goals do not adequately address the issues of equity that affect whether academic success is assured for all students. Among a more ideal set of national goals for education that is multicultural and equitable are the following components: (1) children will start school with a positive sense of self based on living in decent housing and having received adequate attention to their health care and other physical needs; (2) the high school graduation rate will increase to 90 percent; and (3) racism will be eliminated from American classrooms, and school curriculums will project all people of all cultures in a positive vein. (IAH)

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF SCHOOLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF SCHOOLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

America is in an era of transformation. The traditional family is changing. Women are more politically inclined. By the 21st century, it is predicted that racial and ethnic groups in the United States will out number whites for the first time. The "browning of America" will alter everything in society from politics and education to industry, values and culture (Henry, 1990). The demographics of America have changed tremendously within the past decade. The increases by ethnic groups between 1980 and 1990 are as follows:

African Americans	16%
Asian/Others	65%
Hispanics	44%

Source: American Demographics (1989), (Hodgkinson, 1991)

Little by little, our educational experts across America are recognizing that these vast demographic shifts demand a new way of providing educational techniques or how to teach the culturally different.

The Multicultural thrust will be a key element in the restructuring of the educational system in America in preparation of the 21st century. There is a need for a new paradigm in addressing the issues related to implementation of multicultural concepts in the education curriculum at all levels.

The culturally diverse population of this country should be utilized to strengthen the fiber of America. The richness of each ethnic group could contribute to creating a nucleus of knowledge that all will be beneficial to all.

The federal government has allocated millions of dollars for the development of

educational programs to effectively address educating an increasingly culturally diverse population. Many outstanding projects have resulted from national efforts. Unfortunately, much of the funds were awarded to individuals who meant well, but were not clearly aware of the magnitude of the problems associated with implementation of the multicultural thrust in the curriculum for greatest significance. The concept of multicultural education has been misinterpreted by educators. Therefore, the real issue has been circumvented and ignored in search of a rationale to justify not embracing diversity by providing education that is multicultural (Grant 1990).

Multicultural Education programs are established in several forms and fashions. Some programs focus on foods, clothing and entertainment of various cultures. Others create an argument or a plea encouraging individuals of European cultures to be sensitive and attempt to tolerate culturally different groups. The project approaches are so numerous that it would take volumes of books to list them all. Across America, educational institutions have hired professional federal grants and proposal writers to develop documents using the appropriate terminology and creative writing skills to secure state, regional and federal funds for attractive documents. They beautifully describe projects that allege to provide a solution to the problems of cultural diversity in the schools. The results of the vast majority of projects have failed dismally in their efforts to eradicate the problems associated with diversity and move into a growth process.

The major issue is providing an educational experience for all students that will help them to learn more about themselves. The true historical backgrounds and major contributions of all cultural groups must be addressed positively in America's school curriculums. The primary

reason youngsters need to study multiple cultures is to learn how to develop multiple perspectives. This capacity is essential to the development of intelligence (Edmund Gordon 1991).

Policy makers are attempting to solve a moderate problem with traditional solutions. The approach is developing strategies to teach academic concepts to a cultural diverse student population who does not recognize one appropriate position as part of this country. Learning does not accrue in a vacuum, problems and events that occur in and out of the classroom influence the learning process.

The major goal of multiethnic education is to help students develop cross-cultural competency. This entails helping all students to develop attitudes, skills, and abilities needed to function effectively in their respective ethnic groups within the universal American society, as well as within and across ethnic groups.

Ethnic contributions must become an integral part of the general curriculum experienced by all students. According to Banks, multicultural education goes beyond an understanding and acceptance of different cultures, it recognizes the right of different cultures to exist as separate and distinct entities and acknowledges their contributions to the societal entity. (Banks 1982).

The current dilemma for policy makers in preparation of the 21st century is to develop a framework to structure a curricula that focuses on the human attributes of the people, that recognizes the heros and heroines of this country (Boyer 1980).

The administrators of America must discern a valid message to all policy makers of the education systems. The culturally diverse nature of this country is increasing. The present

school curriculum has failed badly to educate this nation's children.

"The crises of the common school, the American public school, is that all too commonly, it fails to educate. By almost every measure, the nation's schools are mired in mediocrity and most Americans know it" (Walter Shapiro 1991). This problem will not go away. The approaches proposed to address this crises is unrealistic. The students in today's classroom are not being prepared to function in mainstream America at the level of first-class citizens. They are taught irrelevant educational concepts for which they cannot identify and associate with their daily lives.

The American 2000 school and community initiatives seem to provide an opportunity for a major breakthrough. Consequently, the national goals for education totally avoids any comments addressing the root of the problem in America's schools.

The following are the broadly structured national education goals according to President George Bush:

Goal l: Readiness for School

Objectives:

By the year 2,000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

-- All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.

-- Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.

-- Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and the number of low birth-weight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced

prenatal health systems.

Goal 2: High School graduaton rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Objectives:

-- The nation must dramatically reduce its dropout rate, and 75 percent of those students who do drop out will successfully complete a high school degree or its equivalent.

-- The gap in high school graduation rates between American students from minority backgrounds and their nonminority counterparts will be eliminated.

Goal 3: Student Achievement an Citizenship

By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

Objectives:

-- The academic performance of elementary and secondary students will increase significantly in every cartel, and the distribution of minority students in each level will more closely reflect the student population as a whole.

-- The percentage of students who demonstrate the ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge, and write and communicate effectively will increase substantially.

-- All students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility.

-- The percentage of students who are competent in more than one language will substantially increase.

-- All students will be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural heritage of this nation and about the world community.

Goal 4: Science and Mathematics

By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Objectives:

-- Math and science education will be strengthened throughout the system, especially in the early grades.

-- The number of teachers with a substantive background in mathematics and science will increase by 50 percent.

-- The number of United States undergraduate and graduate students, especially women and minorities, who complete degrees in mathematics, science, and engineering will increase significantly.

Goal 5: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Objectives:

-- Every major American business will be involved in strengthening the connection between education and work.

-- All workers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills, from basic to highly technical, needed to adapt to emerging new technologies, work methods, and markets through public and private educational, vocational, technical, work place, or other programs.

-- The number of quality programs, including those at libraries, that are designed to serve more effectively the needs of the growing number of part-time and mid-career students will increase substantially.

-- The proportion of those qualified students, especially minorities, who enter college; who complete their degree programs will increase substantially.

-- The proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially.

Goal 6: Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools

> By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
>
> Objectives:
>
> -- Every school will implement a firm and fair policy on use, possession, and distribution of drugs and alcohol.
>
> -- Parents, businesses, and community organizations, will work together to ensure that the schools are a safe haven for all children.
>
> -- Every school district will develop a comprehensive K-12 drug and alcohol prevention education program. Drug and alcohol curriculum should be taught as an integral part of health education. In addition, community-based teams should be organized to provide students and teachers with needed support. (America 2000 Source Book 1991).

The National Goals for Education do not indicate equitable approaches for the distribution of funds. This may provide an opportunity to all Americans to function in mainstream society. There is no mention of a technique for dealing effectively with the blatant racism that exist in America's schools. The issue of homelessness, adequate health care and changes in the existing curriculum that is based on the culture of the white middle class. These are only a few of the major issues that must be addressed to ensure academic success for all students.

The visionary goals for Education that is Multicultural for moving toward the 21st century must include the following:

Goal 1. Readiness for school by the year 2,000. All children in America will start school ready to learn.

a. They will have a positive sense of self, based on living in decent housing, their physical and biological needs will have been met with adequate health care from prenatal to five years old.

Goal 2. High school completion by year 2,000. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent. The school curriculum will focus on teaching all children accurate information about their heritage and the contributions of their ancestors to building the America of today.

Goal 3. Student achievement and citizenship. By the year 2,000, American students will leave all grades demonstrating competency due to being treated with dignity and respect by the total school personnel. This nation will create a curriculum that projects people of all cultures in a positive vain. The true origin of the African American will be included in all textbooks focusing on the kings and queens from which they came, not reinforcing the myth that Africans originated from slavery. Native Americans'and all other minorities' true origin will be included and all others. Racism will be eradicated from Americans classrooms by providing a body of knowledge for educators that will help them to learn the truth about all students' heritage.

Goal 4. Science and mathematics by the year 2,000. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement. All scientist and mathematicians of color will be recognized and identified. Their contributions will not be kept a secret, they will be included in the books, on bulletin boards and counted among American heros and heroines.

Goal 5. Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning. By the year 2,000, every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in an economy that provides an equal opportunity based on a person's knowledge, not on the color of his or her skin.

Goal 6. Safe, Discipline, and Drug-Free Schools. By the year 2,000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning. Students will be challenged and nourished in learning environments that foster a sense of belonging, positive self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. America will provide jobs with decent salaries that offers all individuals an equal opportunity to achieve success. This country needs all Americans to successfully proceed into the 21st century.

Teachers need to acquire a body of knowledge that will enable them to effectively teach

all students. Children need to take pride in their origins and respect, accept and appreciate people of all cultures. They need to prepare to teach broader multicultural understanding in an effort to reach students of various cultural backgrounds (Teedt, Tiedi 1979)

Thus, Multicultural Education is a major resource of the needed new paradigm to prevent the children of America from becoming an "endangered species" of the 21st century.

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